Principles of Parenting: Four Generations in a Row



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A Sunni Waqf Book
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Writen and designed

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Prophet Muhammad (swas) has described and explained a mother's feelings for her child in the following *hadith* (his sayings):

"Truly, those feelings are a blessing (rahmah) from Allah, if it were not for these feelings, a mother would not be willing to breast-feed her child, nor would a farmer be willing to work in the fields (under the scorching heat of the sun)".

“Those whom Allah (in His plan) willeth to guide, He openens their breast to Islam; those whom He wills to leave straying, He makes their breast close and constricted, as if they had to climb up to the skies: thus do Allah (heap) the penalty on those who refuse to believe.”

(Qur'aan Surah Al-An'aam : 6: 125)

فمن يرد الله ان يهديه يشرح صدره للاسلام ومن يرد ان
يضله يجعل صدره ضيقا حرجا كانما يصعد في السماء
كذلك يجعل الله الرجس على الذين لايؤمنون

The good household is a blessing, a place for love, comfort and *hasaanat* (a way to add good deeds). A bad household is a place of trials and punishments.

As a revert to Islam, I have known both houses and it was like leaving an open market full of noise and restlessness to a place of chanting rivers and cool breezes where the soul can rest.

Now, I open my chest like the angels did to Muhammad (swas) and see my heart taken out and washed. This happens every time I renounce a sin from the past and every time I forgive what happened in my life as a non-Muslim.

My education was not particularly conservative, but it was rooted on severe stereotypes of the roles of men and women and parents with children.

My education was not a mercy, but my encounter with Islam was one and I took it inside me like the gardener takes his tools and cuts and prunes his trees, collects his flowers and gets rid of weeds. I took Islam as my abode and as my house and I was there received with honor. Allaah is *kareem* and *rahmaan*.



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Narrated by Abu Huraira: *Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "No child is born except on Al-Fitra (Islam) and then his parents make him Jewish, Christian or Magian, as an animal produces a perfect young animal: do you see any part of its body amputated?"* (Bukhari).

Education is an important part of a person's future.
Education shapes a person's character for life, and the most interesting thing about it is that it takes the first fifteen years or so of one's life, the tender age, the age of total openness. I would qualify this age in my life as a neglected garden where its owners came from time to time to cut trees instead of pruning them and destroyed the main mansion instead of repairing it.

Without Islam, we lose our balance. This is why Prophet Muhammad (swas) and the Noble Qur'aan are called *Haadi, The Guide.* A child is born pure without defect, but his environment amputates him from his blessing: his Islam.
Islam is what brings him a universal wisdom for all humankind; it brings him his equilibrium.
To be a *kaafeer* (an unbeliever), for me, was like walking up on the ledge of a mountain, trying my footholds as on a catwalk. When I lost control, I did not know why I fell, but when I fell, it was accepted as normal, a part of life; there was no meaning to it. Nobody was there to save us; to hurt is expected. To hurt form temper! As I bruised, I did not notice that wounds were left on my body, wounds that would take many years to heal, wounds that hurt me in the middle of my highest joys and hurt the ones who loved me even further. But, not anymore.
Sub'analaah!

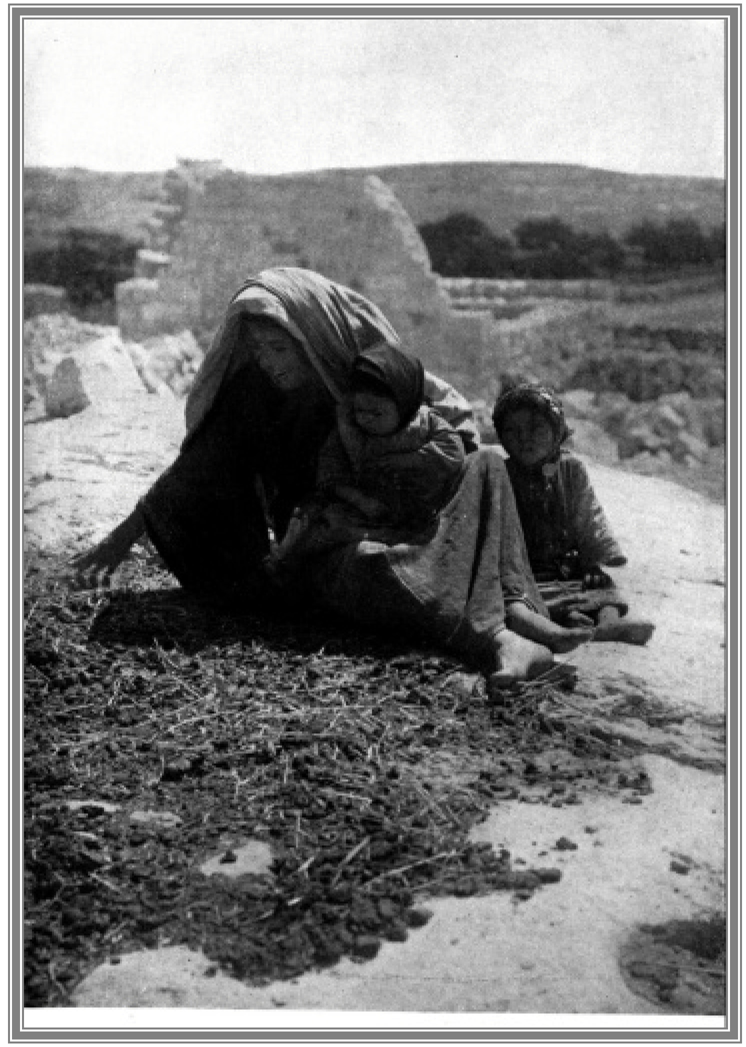


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Family life was for me the place of trials, a place where one was better off being silent, immobile, and obedient. It was a place where to express

oneself happened as a burst of a volcano because it was all contained from within. Showing feelings was the moment that made other uncomfortable, a moment of incomprehension. Nobody was ready to see my burst; they did not expect it!

I had withdrawn inside my shell until the moment I could break out of it and really become the person I wanted to be. *AlHamdulillaah*, Islam broke this shell and reconstituted the frame by putting the pieces back together at the right place. And it may take again the length of a lifetime to finish rebuilding. But at least, it is inhabitable!



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Family life has always been for Muslims the place of ultimate mercy. My family life was the place where every mistake was paid a high price, a place where everything had a price tag on it. My family life was dead, not a place where Muslim parents like to recite this *du'aa*:

وَٱلَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَٰجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّـٰتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَٱجْعَلْنَا

لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا ﴿٧٤﴾ أُوْلَـٰٓئِكَ يُجْزَوْنَ ٱلْغُرْفَةَ بِمَا صَبَرُواْ وَيُلَقَّوْنَ فِيهَا

"O our Sustainer (Allah - the Creator)! Grant that our spouse and our offsprings be a joy to our eyes, and cause us to be foremost (ranking above all others) among those who are conscious of you!"

(Qur'an; Al-Furqan: 25: 74)

My household was a place of trials and a place of tribulations. It was where I almost lost my soul but managed not to by my prayers.

The Prophet (swas) said: *"The likeness of a house in which Allaah is remembered and the house in which Allaah is not remembered is that of the living and the dead, respectively."*

'Aa'ishah (RA) reports: *'When Allaah (may He be glorified) wills some good towards the people of a household, He introduces kindness among them.'"*

(Reported by Imaam Ahmad in al-Musnad, 6/71; Saheeh al-Jaami', 303 / 1704. Reported by Ibn Abi al-Dunya and others).

Abu Hurayrah (RA) once said: *"The Messenger of Allaah (swas) kissed al-Hasan ibn 'Ali, and al-Aqra' ibn Haabis al-Tameemi was sitting with him. Al-Aqra' said: 'I have ten children and I have never kissed any one of them.' The Messenger of Allaah (swas) looked at him and said: 'The*

one who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy.'"

"Whenever he (Muhammad, swas) came back from a journey, the children of his household would be taken out to meet him."

He (swas) used to hug them close to him, as 'Abd-Allaah ibn Ja;far said: *"Whenever the Prophet (swas) came back from a journey, we would be taken out to meet him. One day we met him, Hasan, Husayn and I. He carried one of us in front of him, and another on his back, until we entered Madeenah."* (Saheeh Muslim, 4/1885-2772; see the commentary in Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi, 8/56).



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Our Prophet (swas) would never refuse his affection to children, no matter what they did because affection builds a child's self-worth.

Often, non-Muslims families do the contrary and it sounds to them as the best education. It is not that they are worse parents. They try their best. But, they just do not know any better.

Our Prophet (swas) taught Muslim parents the best way to treat their children and spouse. What follows should explain its basic principles and how they contradict the education I have witnessed.

THE THIRD GENERATION: AFTER THE WORLD WARS: MY GENERATION

My father once saw me pocking one finger into my nose. He slapped my hand and I began to cry in protest, very surprised. He looked at me with angry eyes, slapped me on the head and exclaimed, "Now, you will know why you are crying!"

My mother rushed and said softly "Now, now, hush, my baby. If you continue crying, I will slap you on the face myself." I stopped. "Medicine!" my mom exclaimed. That was the education of the third generation after the wold wars.

When we were young, we were told "mind your manners!", "do not eat with your left hand!", "sit straight!", "put your hands on the table!", "cast down your eyes when you are talking to your elders!".

We stood stiff, not knowing what to do, not wanting to anger our father or mother further. When we did a mistake, it was like having the breath of the Hellfire coming at us. Our cheeks went red, our lips began to

tremble; we were scared to move and do something we did not know or did not remember was forbidden.
Many generations of non-Muslims have been raised in the fear of their parents, especially the father who was seen as the one who put things back in order once back home. The mother was usually seen as the one who loosened the strings or came to the rescue. She was the submissive one and the follower, but she tied the whole family together; she was the indispensable knot.

As I think about the Muslim children education, I feel proud to be a Muslim. Rasulullaah (swas) never slapped any children and he was a model of patience with them. He let children express themselves, but not too much; they knew where their place was.
Instead, he said, *"Hang up the whip where the members of the household can see it."* (Reported by Abu Na'eem in al-Hilyah, 7/332; al-Silsilat al-Saheehah, no. 1446). And that sums it all!
Hinting instead of hitting as punishment is viewed in Islam as an effective means of discipline. The reason for hanging up a whip or stick in the house was explained in another report, where the Prophet (swas) said*: "Hang up the whip where the members of the household can see it, for this is more effective in disciplining them."* (Reported by al-Tabaraani, 10/344-345; al-Silsilat al-Saheehah, no. 1447)
The intimidation should be enough to discourage the family from straying because the one who has bad intentions refrain from indulging in his bad behavior.

Ibn al-Anbaari said: *"There is nothing to suggest that it should be used for hitting, because [the Prophet (swas)] did not command anyone to do that. What he meant was: keep on disciplining them."* (See Fayd al-Qadeer by al-Mannaawi, 4/325).

I remember clearly my grandmother hiding the whip where my parents could not find it. It is how it ceased to be used in our home. And every time my father was reminded of this whip, he would crack a smile in affection for the elder of the family. He knew then that he had been wrong.
Hitting is only a way to discipline when all other means have been tried. Allaah says, *"As to those women on whose part you fear ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly, if it is useful)"* [al-Nisa' 4:34] in that order.
There is also the hadeeth: *"Order your children to pray when they are seven years old, and hit them if they do not do so when they are ten."* (Sunan Abi Dawood, 1/334; see also Irwa' al-Ghaleel, 1/266).
Hitting family members can but cause resentment and intense fear that do not instill love and caring in the family relationships.
Showing one's feelings, like anger, disappointment, displeasure, and explaining clearly what displeased us is a sure way to bring trust between parents and children.
Aa'ishah (RA) said: *"If the Messenger of Allaah (swas) came to know that one of his household had told a lie, he would try to ignore him until he repented."* (See al-Musnad by Imaam Ahmad, 6/152. The text of the

hadeeth is also in Saheeh al-Jaami', no. 4675).
In the last resort, confining children to an isolated room works and it should not be pursued after the child has asked for forgiveness to Allaah first, then to the family.

As a teacher, I have noticed how children have reacted to this kind of teaching. Children used to argue with each other and even be mean to each other. So, each time they had a quarrel, all activity ceased and children gathered in a circle. We discussed what Allaah expects from us as Muslims, to love each other, then we all said '*astaghfirullaah*', even those who had done nothing because it is recommended to say '*astaghfirullaah*' more than a hundred times a day. Afterwards, we would take each other's hands into our own because then sins are flowing away like water flows, and said 'sorry', 'forgive me' to each other. All children had to get to the point where quarreling caused more problem (class interruption, personal efforts) than keeping the peace.
So hinting became an excellent way to discipline.
Anger, frustration just provokes the opposite.
Educating means getting smart!

When I was a child, I lied to my father; he always kept the idea that I was an incorrigible liar. He could never see me otherwise. The result is I kept lying out of fear, until I found a better way.
One day I played on stage at school. I was so convincing, my teachers said in amazement, "She understands the play; she is clever; she has a lot of imagination!" My father, who had awoken from sleep after a 24 hours shift, said, "You were good, no wonder, you are a professional liar!" I was expecting praises; I got disdain instead.
At that time, fathers would never show their approbation before their children; they were afraid we would become conceited. So, even if the world would tell us we were good, if our father said something negative, we would only consider what he said. This was certainly a way to push children to find approbation and look for help outside the home rather than inside. I personally looked outside, more than happy to reach an age of maturity. I am glad some people on this earth have good memories of their childhood; if only they knew how lucky they have been!
So, from now on, I remained with the feeling that no matter what I would do, I would never please my father and no matter what I would be successful in later on in my life, it did not count. I was not worth it! When others would praise me, it felt it could never be honest. When someone loved me, I could not believe in it or appreciate it. I came that close to believe at the impossibility that I could love anyone ever. It took years to appreciate myself again, to re conquer everything, years of misery at the ugly school of life.
But it was worth it!
It was in the fold of Islam that I regained my inner balance.
One has to learn to be human in the corridors of life and life without Islam is like a labyrinth, many intricate passages that drive people on dead ends and dead ends again, almost buried in the tides of events.

I wonder why Allaah has decided to pick me up from the beach I ended up. All I can say is “it was written”:

“Whomsoever Allaah guides, he is the guided one, and whomsoever He sends astray, — then those! they are the losers”[al-A’raaf 7:178]

من يهد الله فهو المهتدي ومن يضلل فأولئك هم الخاسرون

“And whomsoever Allaah wants to put in Al-Fitnah (error, because of his rejecting of Faith), you can do nothing for him against Allaah” [al-Maa’idah 5:41]

سماعون للكذب أكالون للسحت فإن جاءوك فاحكم بينهم أو أعرض
عنهم وإن تعرض عنهم فلن يضروك شيئا وإن حكمت فاحكم بينهم
بالقسط إن الله يحب المقسطين

“And whomsoever Allaah wills to guide, He opens his breast to Islam; and whomsoever He wills to send astray, He makes his breast closed and constricted, as if he is climbing up to the sky” [al-An’aam 6:125]

فمن يرد الله أن يهديه يشرح صدره للإسلام ومن يرد أن يضله يجعل
صدره ضيقا حرجا كأنما يصعد في السماء كذلك يجعل الله الرجس
على الذين لا يؤمنون



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Anas b. Malik reported*: “I have never seen anyone more kind to one's family than Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him)”* (Sahih Muslim Book 030, Number 5734)

Children who are morally and spiritually aware usually develop a sense of their own self-worth. Helping children developing self-esteem is one of the most important things that parents can do for them; it is the foundation of their faith and commitment to Allah. Confidence brings certainty and self-appreciation. Religious education is also supposed to bring a child to recognize his sins and give him the knowledge of the ways he can be forgiven for committing them.



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The parents are not helping when their child is remembered all the time about one mistake he did once or if he committed a sin and nobody expressed anything to him at the time. Worse, if the parents make him think he is a failure because of this sin, especially if the family makes him feel that he will never be good because of this mistake, the child should not be expected to feel happy and to love himself.

Instilling self-love in children is paramount because a person who does not love himself or herself cannot be expected to be able to love anyone, less alone his/her family members.

Children need to be assured that they are a special gift from Allah, that Allaah has *"created man in the best of molds"* (Quran 95:4) and he is one of thee molds. Nobody is ugly or stupid in Islam; these are two words a Muslim should never utter in front of anyone!

Children, on the contrary, have to dedicate their talents to working on themselves for being a person Allaah will love. That's the best way to give them values, purpose and direction for life.

The Prophet Muhammad (swas) said, *"Allah has indeed said your children shall be a temptation to you,"* and he said to the boys (his grandchildren, Hasan and Hussein), *"Dear little ones, it is because of you that a man could forget his tasks he must do. You are the perfume of Allah!"*

Here, he did not say that they were preventing him from his responsibilities, but that he was grateful to have them around and disturbing him. He was glad there is someone in his life that makes

him forget about his tasks and how sad is the one who does not possess children! It made it sound as natural and expected. The children got the message and would pay attention later while feeling that they a blessing and not pests. Prophet Muhammad (swas) would even let children on his back while leading the *Sallah* to prove that they were always welcome.

Narrated By Usama bin Zaid, *“Allah's Apostle used to put me on (one of) his thighs and put Al-Hasan bin 'Ali on his other thigh, and then embrace us and say, "O Allah! Please be Merciful to them, as I am merciful to them."” (Sahih Bukhari 73: 32)*

A child who tells himself, "I am lovable” will tell himself, “I am confident, Allaah loves me so I love Allaah."

A child needs to be praised to feel good about himself.

Our Prophet (swas) used to carry his grandsons, Hasan and Husain (may Allaah be pleased with them) on his shoulders. When an onlooker once remarked: “What a ride he is having!", the Prophet Muhammad (swas) promptly said: "And how majestic is the rider!" (Tirmidhi).



This is not only true for children, it is also true for adults and those living with us. Children mirror other people’s attitudes and also what others perceive of them; they measure themselves by the standards set by those shaping their lives. While we may show disapproval of wrong actions, the child still needs to feel cherished. While as adults we can cope with emotional disappointments, children are very vulnerable and they may feel a deep despair at the sight of a rejection.

A child needs to feel like whatever mistakes he does, he is loved and Allaah will forgive him, and if Allaah forgives everything to whom He wills, what about their parents?

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“Truly no one despairs of Allah's soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith." (Quran; Ysuf: 12:87)

يَـٰبَنِىَّ ٱذْهَبُوا۟ فَتَحَسَّسُوا۟ مِن يُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ وَلَا تَا۟يْـَٔسُوا۟ مِن رَّوْحِ
ٱللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ لَا يَا۟يْـَٔسُ مِن رَّوْحِ ٱللَّهِ إِلَّا ٱلْقَوْمُ ٱلْكَـٰفِرُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا۟

So, if a child despairs of the mercy of his parents, it is like losing faith in them and losing the trust.

On the contrary, a child who is confident of his parents' love will exhibit thankfulness. He will be willing to take responsibilities and will be better able to cope with stressful situations in his future life. Not only that, the child will feel more enthusiastic about challenges and will not automatically withdraw in front of any situation he might judge too overwhelming like talking to people, admitting one's mistakes, showing courage and determination.

So, the Muslim parents should show their children how to communicate their feelings, openly and honestly. They should truly listen in a caring way and never reject them even when busy. They should encourage and help them in their taste like growing their own garden, drawing, taking care of animals, etc .

Abu Qatada narrates, *"The Prophet came out towards us, while carrying Umamah, the daughter of Abi Al-As (his grand-daughter) over his shoulder. He prayed, and when he wanted to bow, he put her down, and when he stood up, he lifted her up."*

(Bukhari 73:25)

Narrated by Aisha, Ummul Mu'minin (ra): *"I never saw anyone more like the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) in respect of gravity, calm deportment, pleasant disposition… When she (Fatima) came to visit him (the Prophet) he got up to (welcome) her, took her by the hand, kissed her and made her sit where he was sitting; and when he went to visit her, she got up to (welcome) him, took him by the hand, kissed him, and made him sit where she was sitting."*

(Bukhari Book 41, Number 5198)

Parents should not only be a model, they should demonstrate to their offspring how to get along with others through negotiation and compromise.

Fairness is important as well as a consistent discipline.

Parents prove their children they are able to do things on their own successfully by letting them take responsibilities and letting them take decisions. They should keep a sense of humor and treat children lovingly, with respect and courtesy. In a few words, Muslim parents' role is to help children learning that they are beautiful and worthwhile people. And this is also valuable in our interactions with our spouse, brothers and sisters and parents.

The Prophet (swas) said, *"He is not of us who does not have mercy on young children, nor honor the elderly"* (Tirmidhi)

Narrated by 'Aisha: *"A lady along with her two daughters came to me asking me (for some alms), but she found nothing with me except one date which I gave to her and she divided it between her two daughters, and then she got up and went away. Then the Prophet came in and I informed him about this story. He said, "Whoever is in charge of (put to test by) these daughters and treats them generously, then they will act as a shield for him from the (Hell) Fire."* (Sahih Bukhari Volume 8, Book 73, Number 24)

'Abdullah bin 'Abi Qatada narrates: “My father said, "The Prophet said: *"When I begin the prayer, I intend to make it long, but I hear a baby crying and shorten the prayer, being aware of the Mother's emotion because of the crying."*" (Bukhari Volume 1, Book 11, Number 675, 676)

My family would look at me with astonished eyes if I told them that I never wash clothing or exercise when I know that my neighbors are putting their children in bed. They would not understand why a person does not feel free to do anything she wants in her house in order not to bother her neighbors. They would say, “Get a life!”

What I found oppressing as a non-Muslim was the suspicion that existed between parents and children, suspicion to be lied upon, suspicion to do things in secret, suspicion that one would want to hurt others on purpose, suspicion that some children were better treated than others.

Suspicion in Islam is regarded as a sin.

In my generation, where I lived, the other children in the family watched what the youngest were doing and took their revenge as soon as they could. Slap, “That’s for being spoiled by our parents!” Slap, “That’s for reporting our bad actions to mother and then father!” Slap, “that’s for being stupid!” Slap, “that’s for stopping looking at me!”

Most of the time, the children who were the smallest were thought spoiled by the parents (they got more hugs or were more often excused because they were too young to understand anything or they always were the first ones to be served or given gifts). Meanwhile, the older brothers and sisters for being spoiled mistreated them. Well, most of the time, the smallest ones did not even know the meaning of the expression ‘being spoiled’ and would even refer to themselves as being spoiled without much understanding.

Older children would take the sit of the smallest one under the pretext that he was smaller or mom was not here so he could not cry baby. They would ask him to do their errands, “Go fetch me a glass of water!” or “Massage my back!”, then they would coo between themselves, “She is really the kindest, one of the kind!” The smallest would always volunteer; that was the rule! But the smallest would never participate in the fun, that was grown up stuff and besides the small ones always get injured in the process, don’t they?

The older children had boyfriends and girlfriends and were utterly bored when the smallest followed them everywhere in search of affection or companionship. No, the smallest place was at home in the cradle!

The eternal “baby” or regarded as such by the whole family could not take responsibilities or express feelings. He was she pest.

However, the smallests were proudly introduced to friends, “That’s my little sister” “O! She is so cute!” Proud smiles. “What is your name?” “Sissie.” “O! Sissie, the imperial princess!?” Chuckles. Then, older children talking about the youngest, “She is really smart. She always has A’s and she is clever with her hands. Also, she asks too many questions, but we cannot have it all! She is very kind too, but you’d better not tell

it in front of her!" Later as the children grow, they would say, “Yeah, she’s cute... and she knows it!”

It is wrong to treat children of the same family differently. If the olders are given responsibilities or the right to talk, so they should be given to the smallest ones!

Each child should be responsible of the others, regardless of their age so that they do not become jealous of each other and do not become enemies instead of best friends. Children should be the stronger chains that link family members together. They should share and appreciate each other to become lifetime companions. When one child would make a mistake, all the children should look for being punished instead of him; they should make the others pass before themselves while they are still being regarded as good people. Parents should foster an atmosphere of solidarity to the point that when something is done in the family, everyone participates with his own skills and everyone is listened to. And they should do things to please Allaah only, not to acquire privileges over the other children.



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The result of this education, third generation after the wars, the older children became very loose as a reaction against parents' overruling. They would steal in shops for the fun of it, go parties in parents' backs, argue and fight with each other when dad was not looking and mother was busy. Mom just yelled often but rarely slapped. Dad slapped but tried to keep it minimal because of his great strength. The society believed in slapping children and beating the fingers in class.
But kids were happy in their odd ways of loving. Parents were miserable but thought themselves happy in an odd sort of way too!

THE SECOND GENERATION:

AFTER WORLD WARS GENERATION: MY PARENTS' GENERATION.

One day, my father who was in good mood explained to us how even more severe was his own education. He said, "When my father would open his knife, everybody would eat in silence; when he would close his knife (symbol of manhood in old West Europe), we would stop eating right away, no matter if we were done or not.
And we had better be done because even the smallest crust of bread on the table had to be eaten! We would throw a bucket of water on the table to wash away the few residues left in the plates that were carved inside the table itself.
I had to leave school at fourteen because a teacher had told my father I was not as good as the others and I was immediately put to work, a hard physical work. You guys are intellectuals, good for nothing really! This one wants to be a writer, an occupation sure to make you starve everyday! We did not have these foolish ideas you have in your heads, kids. No time to play around. We were tough! Engineering, that's my idea of success! Teacher is the second best job although it is for lazy people. Lots of vacations!" He would look around his children and would declare, "I was successful in life; my children are science oriented. You will go far, kids! As for my own brothers and sisters, they were more educated. My sisters did all the work for my mother who sit and gave orders, so as soon as they gained they reached the age of independence they left home, never to come back except passing by.

They did well in life, but after the inheritance, we completely split up. We did not feel we had anything in common. Then I had to go fight in Africa against those Arabs, hate all of them. Really we should kick out all these immigrants living on our country's welfare! At least I have always been worthy of the bread I earn!"
That was his experience in life.

My father would play with us a lot when we were smaller and he made us laugh. He would cook for hours every now and then and would make the birthday cakes all by himself, for the pleasure of pleasing us. Later, he was so burned out by work, he could not enjoy his life anymore. He would come back from work when we would wake up for going to school. My mother would have us all day long, angry, confronting children who loved each other very much on occasions and on others doubted very much that they loved each other. She would despair watching us talking our heads off or report any incident, crying or yelling about what had happened between us. She was sad to see us all not happy and she did not know what to do about it. "We were so happy when you were younger!" she used to say, " I do not know what happened!" Well, the 60's had happened with the woman's revolution, the birth control pill, the slogans for liberty, independence, individualism that is so much praised nowadays and, on top of it, teenage. And, of course, no religious guidance!
The ancient values of family, pride to defend the nation, rearing teams of children for future soccer games, all of this had disappeared.

The second generation was completely dependent on their parents and had an unconditional respect for them. They'd better! All the neighborhood was watching to protect children and teach them discipline and also love them. So that children, even after they were married, would seek advice from their parents, visit them and ask permissions from them. Their obedience and respect to their own parents and elders were unbreakable and were strong enough to maintain a strong family unit, although not automatically based on love but mostly on obedience.
It was the generation before TV and computers, and the generation before the disappearance of ballrooms where young people gathered and talked for hours on their thresholds before going to bed at 9:00 PM. It was the generation when beaux invited their girlfriends to public cinemas and asked their parents the permission for marrying. It was the generation people still had the fear of God but without the faith. People were more open to divorce, but the Christian Catholic "married in sickness or health, for the better or for the worse" was not yet a joke for two main reasons: contraception was not wildly used yet, and rearing children was everyone responsibility. Nowadays, rearing children is only undertaken by a few and a lot does not even want to take the responsibility.
The third generation would make their marriage work. It was an intermediary generation between ancient models and new models. Girls did not sleep around because they were too scared to get pregnant. They were the element that stabilized the marriage because marriage meant

stability. They were still raised to be good mothers and good wives no matter what the husband's liberties outside home. Men were good fathers inside the family and still good providers. Men and women would faithfully follow in the tracks of their ancestors, not knowing that this would soon change drastically.



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THE FIRST GENERATION:
THE DURING WORLD WARS GENERATION: MY GRANDPARENTS.

As far as I know, my grandparents' generation was educated with sensible and loving principles. Life was easy for them when they were young and the idea of the epoch was to let go, have fun and enjoy being with each other. The adventurers had made many fascinating discoveries as well as scientists. Freud was remembered. People were ready to travel and many went abroad for colonization. It was an epoch of intense creativity and originality, an epoch where people had confidence in mankind and they believed striving would bring whatever they wanted. It was the generation of world discoveries, the meeting of entirely new and exotic cultures; it was the generation before TV, the generation where people gathered around radios to hear news together and went to the theater and races. Common people liked to bet and take risks. People did not go out except to have a stroll in the park or paddle on the lake but they traveled long distances in their minds.

This was also the generation of the World Wars when people began to put strong Catholic-inherited values into question and doubt that the World could be at peace one day. These people began to doubt humanity and its worth. Wars made them confused and stiff. Resistance

was at all levels. Merchants refused to sell goods to the enemy and children were beaten for talking to the occupant's troops.

It was a generation of intense strives and fears. Many returned to conservatism.

They learned to never waste anything and be brave always. It was a generation where people still put a candle on the windowpane to attract strangers in need of charity or left an empty plate on the table as remembrance of Jesus and his disciples. People prayed before eating and kneeled down at night in front of the crucifix before going to bed. Marriages were in white (symbol of virginity) and nobody would dare miss the Sunday mass. Some read the Bible.

Children obeyed the parents because they did not know anything else and as the Lord's command. The "Christian" solidarity was strong and the most important value for survival. Jobs were scarce. Meetings at home were the principal fun they had, and also reading, sensible reading, readings watched by the parents. Men and women were usually too busy to think of anything else than survival. Romance or fiction books were considered immoral or not enough down to earth. Women were good housewives; men were hard workers. Divorce was a disgrace, so faithfulness was guaranteed as much as possible.

Later, women got the jobs while men were at war. It was the beginning of women's labor and the beginning of sitters and day cares.

IN BETWEEN GENERATIONS:

CONFUSED SECOND AND THIRD GENERATIONS:

Our generation confused our mothers very much and confused us on the way. Squeezed between a strict and materially deprived education they received and between our consuming freedom of modern time, our parents witnessed the conflict of generations! They did not know how to act; they did not know how to love!

Moms were suddenly caught between an old system and a new one, between too many restrictions and too many liberties, between a war and a morals' revolution.

They had to be the traditional loving mother while dealing with new problems they had not a clue how to deal with.

Fathers reacted negatively to their children's thirst for materialism and dreams. They wanted to provide what they had not had, but they gave too much materially to their children while being emotionally stingy and morally unmovable as they parents had been but at a time that fostered the opposite. No wonder that children rebelled against parents and parents could not understand their children and wondered what they had done wrong. After all, they had just followed their parents' teachings!

Where were they wrong?

Were they parents wrong too?

One day I surprised a series of conversations.

One lady was asking the other one, “Why don’t you come to *masjid* anymore?” “My husband has found a new friend to go with him” Frowns, doubtful eyes.

I felt a chill going through me, and I thought, ‘Here is my mother’s generation confused again! Eh! The man is not taking his wife with him whenever he has nobody to go with him; he is encouraging one male friend to go with him! That’s charity and it is the woman’s charity to let him do it!’ I knew that Muslims had been touched by the conflict of genders and felt resentful whatever men did. “That’s not Islam! Islam is mercy. Where is your mercy towards your sister? Do not make her doubt about her spouse, please.”

New generation seemed to look only what was their immediate interest (what people would think of them, what their spouse were doing for them and what they deprived them of) and forgot about the big picture!

Another was saying, “My mother tries to look young, mini skirt or elastic pants as on TV because moms are cool now. And that’s all my fault! See, one day I came back home and I was so young I just repeated what I had heard people say; I did not understand what I was saying. I told my mother, ‘Why Carole’s mother looks like she is her sister?’ My mother replied, ‘Well, I had five children, so I cannot look like she does. I have stretch marks, my body is sagging. I am not has alert anymore as she is. I put on weight. People used to value this!’ Now I tell her, ‘Mom, you do not need to measure up; you are beautiful the way you are!’

I am a hypocrite! See, when I was a child I always had these Barbie dolls I carried around with me, looking so perfect and all, with rich and shiny cloth like a princess. As I grew up with this ideal of body size, to my mother I say, “You are fine”, but inside, I swore that when I was going to have kids, I would look like a supermodel, a super-mommy, and I would be one of those on magazines all over the shopping course, and my kids would be proud of me.”



Photo courtesy www.arttoday.com Ó2002

I am chilling down. Pride based on appearance or based on faith, which ones my dears?

The other girl replied honestly, "Me, I am so scared my husband would prefer thin women to my eight size and take another one, I'd do anything! Men also have a lot of expectations for their women. How can I compete?" "And him, doesn't he care about you leaving him?" "Well, he'd do anything to impress, still have this Corvette he is dreaming about, even *riba* does not deter him. Some people say it is ok since we live in a non-Muslim environment." "Are you joking, sister?" "I guess sometimes we prefer people's opinions to scholars opinions… He thinks if he brings more money home, a better lifestyle, I'd be happier. Well, that's not what I think, but money does not hurt either. We're lost, I guess! If we were more pious, we would not mind all this! Yesterday, I told my daughter to wash the dishes. She said, "Why, mom? Always me! Why don't we use the washing machine!?" "It is expensive!" "Puff, for a couple of bucks! Are you kidding?" "Great cars! Great houses! Look, everybody in movies has great style and nobody washes the dishes!" "How cool! Tomorrow, I'll drive you to the newspaper; they might have a job for you there, dear." Laughs. "Have we forgotten that real beauty is inside?" "Well, that's what people say!" I chilled inside once again.

Why feel pressured to look like everybody else?

No wonder people dream and are cheated by their own dreams!

FOURTH GENERATION:

THE COMING GENERATION: OUR CHILDREN

As I see my niece who is an unbeliever, I do not see much difference between her and the new generation of Muslims, especially teenagers. She has earrings piercing her tummy and tight torn jeans at the thighs she pays fortunes to get as is. As I go to *masjid*, I see the young girls wearing clothing so tight, I am afraid their *sallah* might not be accepted. I am afraid their mothers do not have any power to make them change. I see how the children argue with hem. How is that? Who or what is to blame? Some young boys even appear at *sallah* time with three pairs of earrings and pants well under the belt.

Men and women are equals now, not complementary anymore!

It is hard to make the difference anymore.

So it is bliss to see teenagers taking our religion seriously and surely there is a wave of coming back to true Islam, *AlHamdulillah*. People need to fall a few times to see how unsuccessful with their lives they can be, and surely Islam is universal and wise and true wherever we live, whoever we are. How many generations is it going to take to reach this conclusion once again? I hope just one or at least half of one.

Insha Allaah!

But what is happening around the world, really?

Women have now free access to contraception and plus it is free.

The old concept that men are by nature polygamous and women are by nature monogamous is slowly wearing out as their clothing. Both males and females have equal liberty of expression, speech, well, at least the liberty of making fools of themselves. Feminists did great on work opportunities but did poorly on men's respect for women and women respect for men. Muslims look sadly at each other and sigh, "I wish I could find a true Muslimah", "I wish I could find a true Muslim man." Non Muslims sigh, "I wish I could find a real woman", "I wish I could find a real man."

It is as sad as that!

Men and women have discovered they were equal house workers (or at least, we are getting there).

I always want to say. See, huh, you did not invent hot water!

The Prophet (swas) said, *"The safety of a man at times of fitnah is in his staying home."* A man!

"The Messenger of Allaah (swas) used *to "sew his own clothes, mend his own shoes and do whatever other work men do in their homes."* (Reported by Imaam Ahmad in al-Musnad, 6/121; Saheeh al-Jaami', 4927). So it is obvious that home makers were not exclusively feminine!

And this is the testimony of his wife 'Aa'ishah (RA), when she was asked about what the Messenger of Allaah (swas) used to do in his house. Her response described what she herself had seen and it is surely not what we always see in Muslim houses even if it is the men who cook at congregations and it is them who clean the *masjid*. According to another report, she said, *"He was like any other human being: he would clean his clothes, milk his ewe and serve himself."* (Reported by Imaam Ahmad in al-Musnad, 6/256; al-Silsilat al-Saheehah, 671)

She (may Allaah be pleased with her) was also asked about what the Messenger of Allaah (swas) used to do in his house, and she said, *"He used to serve his family, then when the time for prayer came, he would go out to pray."* (Reported by al-Bukhaari, al-Fath, 2/162).

Modern men are surely not like every human being. As more women gain more rights, more men resist it because thry were taught otherwise. They are relearning what their ancestors found natural: be *awliyah* (friend, helper) to their spouse!

When Rasulullaha (swas) did not find any meal prepared when he came home, he would just say, "I am fasting". How many modern men enter into a rage if their meal is not ready on time? Stress? Impatience? Lack of respect and love? There is a mix of all of this.

Women are not helping by being kind; they are unlearning how to dodge. They feel stressed too but they have little resistance to stress because they feel neglected and pressured to look like the perfect wife their mothers did not prepare them to be.

The education of the new generations will depend entirely on the way their parents behave. If the parents cannot deal their lives, how will their children manage to be balanced and wise?

Modern men and women are much more than equal housekeepers, and that's the tragedy; they are equal providers, so much that some men expect women to pay for their studies, and some women

expect their husbands to stay home rearing children (common in Germany and European Nordic countries).

Men also expect women to pay their share in restaurants and pay the bills divided equally. What kind is marriage is based on equal division? Instead of measuring responsibilities in terms of love and caring, they measure it in terms of bills and time allocated.

No wonder some men want submissive women they are happy to find from Asian immigrants. If they cannot find them, they might beat the ones they have into submission. They crave for sweet, loving women who do not complain and leave them space as their mothers used to be. Some men are so willing to please women, they do not dare contradict them anymore or initiate conversation for fear of needing to justify themselves.

Women are expecting much more from their mates.

Since they do not have anymore female friends, they try to get friendship from their spouse or their kids.

Women feel frustrated not to get all the attention from their partners and think they (the males) do not care for them if they are not ready to talk and pay attention all the time. They lose patience and blame them for what they are. Men who used to come home and put their feet under the table live in Hell. They think women are a pain because they feel that they are not providing enough. They do not have a clue about women and they do not sense the need to provide emotional comfort modern women are craving for. However, they still want to be taken care of. Men and women feel that they do not understand each other anymore and that celibacy is a hundred times better than marriage. Instead of marrying, they live in co-habitation. They do not see that they will pass these behavior patterns on to their children! They believe in divorce in case it does not work or they did not find a way to solve problems. They might even dread being together and come into contact only for pleasure and when they feel a need to. Children have become a load they would rather not bother with, anyway, the outside world is dangerous and deceptive and children cost too much money, this money should be better spent on a nice house and treats at the restaurant since they do not know how to cook anymore or do not have time anymore, and fast foods are really a blessing for them. And away with our health; family dinner gatherings; life is too stressful to bother with each other.

How much we have to learn from *Rasulullaah*. Let's hope the new generations will learn what's best for them! *Insha Allah*.

Women and men do not expect the same things from each other anymore. Times have changed because the family is much smaller, they have more hobbies, they are more educated; they are more consumption oriented and more individualistic!

In the earlier generations, couples were just worried about sensible and practical things; they did not have too much time or opportunities to read, learn new skills or hobbies, be on the Internet, watch channel discovery or read fashion magazines or they simply did not have time or leisure to dream about exotic places or having too much fun. Being serious was an honor. Now being cool is an honor!

People have now more time but are busier. Actually, while in the past people had one stable job, they now have several jobs allowing them to pay debts and to insure a more comfortable living style. Finished scrubbing for hours, throwing a powder on the carpet just do the same. Our mothers used to be proud up to the shine of their staircase, how stupid when we know we are going to move anytime!?
With new technologies, people's visions open to the world and the computer becomes the central occupation because it is like an immense library that provides more services than a library can offer.

As Muslims, the Internet is a wonderful tool because it is an easy access to knowledge and 'fatwas', especially in countries where libraries are difficult to find or when the local libraries do not provide all that is needed. Islamic softwares and freewares are a treat as well as oral and written lessons online such as the proper way of reciting Qur'aan, which is considered sophisticated and few teachers are able to be found. All of this not be easily available in Western countries. However, mixing genders on the net have caused many marriage breakdowns because people meet companions they would never dream of meeting otherwise. They open up to new interests they might not have developed otherwise, things or people that might render their real companions dull in comparison. Instead of keeping what we have and be grateful for it, the virtual world might create desires that did not exist before or intensify old desires that might be better kept dormant. Hundreds of advertisements have a direct sensual intention, and we even start talking about "cyber love" or "cyber dating"!
As Muslims, this is not acceptable.
While the net can successfully provide for the spouse who might be hard to find in real life, things can go too far and may be out of control. Imagine the effect on our children who are encouraged to us the Net and cannot do school assignments without the Internet!
The result is already visible: they love music and mix freely, even on the step of the *masjid* on Fridays!!
Where are the free thinkers now? Homeschooling used to be a solution; it looks like it will become harder and harder to have access to this privilege! Homeschoolers used to be many; it will become now a rarity! How are we going to control what our children learn?

Not only that, but images have a more and more greater impact on people, especially images of living creatures which are not allowed in Islam except for exclusive teaching purposes! Looking at images on the Net intensifies desires and images make us lose our desire for reading. We are constantly encouraged to join groups we feel we belong to, that might also be sects. We are encouraged to consumption by the shopping facility online or by phone. Many people do not have enough self-control or a deep reflection on what they are doing, so they tend to follow their whims or something that looks good or sounds great at first sight. They buy, join, then throw away, encouraging a society of waste! This situation is increased by fast or superficial reading. People do not read their mails anymore, but rather scan through it, leaving all

kinds of unwanted information sip through, information they forward in a click.

Miscommunication is easy to occur between correspondents because they become “bad listeners” or try to be attentive but lack the physical expression or the person’s background in order to understand the situation fully. The Net encourages people to express their feelings without retinue and circumspection. Our children might follow this pattern and forget that, in Islam, words are important and one word can cast us into Hell.

Besides, the time passed before a computer screen is a time taken away from the family, especially the time that could be used to help children do their homework or learn about Islam.

It has been found that the Internet depressed people!

Many people feel more disappointed and more isolated from the real world because they live more and more in a virtual world. The real world seems less interesting or dangerous because of the news about the wars going on in the world and all the x-files (unusual criminal cases) they read about. They forget the beauty of sharing and talking to each other, our neighbors.

People are less active physically and physical activities help greatly the well being of the family by being healthier and do things together.

Couples talk less and less with each other and do not see the importance of making efforts. They become lazier, so that they tend to prefer quick solutions to their problems. They’d rather go to the restaurant rather than preparing a meal together or as an easy way to avoid a conflict. They would solve their problems in public because they try to avoid any direct confrontation. Confrontation often lead to violence and not to problem solving as if should.

They lose the notion of intimacy. The house is no longer a place where everything is a secret part of the family life, where strangers do not have anything to do or say. Family life is not anymore this intimate and secret place, this other world that makes what we are and of which we are proud.

Our parents used to conceal any bad feelings they had about their families and would always praise the members of their families before others. This Islam also teaches us to do.

Nowadays, people complain about their children in public, not understanding that they are turning others away from them and giving a long lasting bad impression on family life for these young people who are not yet married.

Even worse, they prefer outsiders’ opinions to the family members’ opinions. Outsiders can but confirm their apprehensions, fears and since the outsiders have only the opinion of the person injured, they give wrong advice that do not fit the real situation.

Nobody tells them sensibly, “Now, now, calm down. You are over exaggerating. It is not that one is right and the other is wrong; you just do not communicate!”

In Islam, family affairs have to remain secret and a friend is obligated to keep his other friends secrets. Conversations are not to be reported either. Families are therefore obliged to solve problems together; they experience solidarity and respect for each other. They do not rely on others to fix their problems. This is an important part of Islam: to remain self-sufficient as much as possible.

As I think about these situations, I remember that there were two men who appeared before Rasulullaah (swas) for judgement. One complained that the other had injured his eye. Rasulullah (swas) said, "I will not judge until I have heard the other party. Maybe the other one has both eyes injured!"

Getting wrong advice can only lead to a "eye for eyes, tooth for tooth" situation. Family members pull away from each other as a result. In other cases, they finally decide to see a counselor instead of trying to be merciful and compassionate to each other as Islam teaches us to do. The best among us is the one who forgives and the one who conciliate people.

Some couples even prefer to solve the situation by living like roommates, a situation where nothing is expected from each other and some have adventures with people who bring what they need momentarily.

This is surely not prone to give children a good image of marital life.

Modern couples have less time for anything and they do not get quality time together. As a result, housecleaning is put aside for later. Teaching one's children is delegated to computer programs, schools, and TV programs so that independence and individuality become part of children's values.

Parents become a source of money and fun for children; they are the backs up when problems arise; they are no longer models and teachers and trainers.

Women feel life inside the home is boring. They'd rather be a film star or a successful manager and they need money for staying beautiful and attractive or for having good time or just for buying toys or the sitters when they go relaxing.

Women have more responsibilities working and taking care of children plus running their household. They are still women who are fragile and emotional inside even if they have to show they are strong and tough outside. Men do not see why they should behave differently from their fathers who never took charge of a home.

"Eh girl! You are the ones who wanted women liberation! Not us! What are you complaining about? Didn't you get what you wanted?"

"That's great! I love my work, my career, but I need to talk to you in order to relax. I need to just talk to someone! See, I do not have females friends anymore; they are all too busy either at work, on their computers or before their TV sets! If I do not talk to someone; I will explode!"

"I'm tired too! You do not need to work! It's your fault! All I want is to relax saying nothing, just having a nap or zip on my TV. If you could leave me alone for at least once in a while! Why do you always complain anyway, don't I provide enough?"

"I do not complain! I have my problems as you have yours!"
"I do not understand what you have to complain about. I do go through this too at work and I do not bother you with it!"
"You are the one who is prefect, hein? You guys are all the same! I know that you never cared about me!"
"I do care! What are you talking about?"
"No, you don't. You never want to listen to me! You are selfish!"
"Bother! You women! What a bore! I give up!"
Furious, he slams the door and goes alone for a run. He thinks, 'She is always rejecting me. She never feels good about me. I have just forgotten about what she said. I was distracted. I cannot remember everything she says or guess what she wants me to remember! I am the one who always forgives her, why can't she forgive me once in a while? I fix things everywhere; isn't that enough?'
She thinks, 'Men are always thinking about themselves. If only he would listen! He would not have to say anything, just be there! I feel ignored and neglected when he forgets what I said! I do not need him giving me advice; I just want to share, vent my frustrations! Why can't he understand that? If only he had taken me in his arms instead of arguing, I would have calmed down right away!'
I remember talking to one of my friends. She said, "I know your homeland better than you do". I said "No! You are a foreigner, so you look at this country from the eyes of a foreigner. You do not know my country better than I do; you just look at it differently. I have another look! Both complete.'
Men and women should look at each other that way.

Being in a fast society where people move around and jump from job to job and are too busy to argue, the new generation does not feel the need anymore to keep their relationships if there is not an immediate benefit or profit from it. Divorce is easy or concubinage is not a definitive commitment. Friends on the wire are easy to be dismissed. Friends at work or at school are temporary friends as we move from location to another or from country to another every few years. We just do not commit. They do not have a positive notion of family life and if they were the only child, they do not know what blessing there is in a large family. Family life is not valued anymore, not worth the bother!
They give up!
Same thing when new generation rears a child.
It happens all the time. Children are given orders "leave that thing!", and when they don't obey, the parents simply go back to their conversation and forget or give up.

To be successful in educating children, parents should start early.

Children are never too small to understand. Their early years are probably the most important opportunity for parents to start them in the right direction. Once good patterns are adopted; they are easy to maintain. On the contrary, bad patterns are more difficult to change. Since parents have less patience, they tend to discipline their children because they are angry rather than because they want to teach them. Muslim parents have the obligation of teaching their children.

The Prophet (SWAS) said: *"Allaah will ask every shepherd (or responsible person) about his flock (those for whom he was responsible), whether he took care of it or neglected it, until He asks a man about his household."*

Also, both parents need to tell the children the same thing. If they cannot communicate effectively with each other, this will not happen. If parents sometimes disagree on how to discipline the children, they should discuss it privately, not in front of the children. Their decisions are not public; they should come up only when necessary. Children in Islam are taught to knock on the parents' bedroom and ask for permission to enter because the privacy of the parents must be respected.

Samely, parents should respect their children, check if their rules are understood; they also should be consistent and not constantly change these rules. A child would get confused and lose his confidence in their parents' judgment or think they are unjust or cruel.

As parents feel helpless before their children making scenes, they tend to reward them for crying. So, every time they want something, they will cry.

Consider this example:

A boy in a supermarket suddenly yelled behind me, "That's not fair!" The parents replied, angry, "Put the d--- thing down!" Cries, trepidation. Everybody looking. Slap. A person on the queue exclaims, "Heartless parents! Beating children! You should go to court!" Parents pick up the thing and put it back on the cart for purchase. Child smiles, thinking 'I have won!'

Giving up is not the solution. Teaching children to obey and ask for forgiveness when they embarrass their parents in public is the way. However, parents should be quick to excuse their children when they apologize and show they are sorry for what they did. When we do wrong, we seek forgiveness from Allah, and want to be excused. Our kids too! So, apologize for your mistakes.

The Prophet (swas) said, *"Blessed is the one who controls his tongue, whose house is sufficient for him, and who weeps over his mistakes."*

Although mothers often threaten their children by telling them that they will get into trouble when their father gets home, it is better that the discipline comes from both parents. A punition coming late is perceived as an injustice because children do not remember what they did wrong and the father is regarded as the whip. It is enough to put them in a room apart, to show disappointment, to withhold privileges.

Parenting is a full-time job.

Part of proper parenting is just being there, not being providers only. "When that intimate relationship does not develop between parents and children, when [the youth reaches] the age where freedom to them is to have as much pleasure as they can, they will do [what they want] because the parents became just a fixture in their life," explains a brother.

Teen years are especially a time of struggle.

Parents should remember that: Teens are trying to find themselves. They are trying to find their own new position in the family and society, their own opinions. The need not to be rejected is so important, they will go out of their way just to feel that they are being accepted. Islamic education should play a vital role at this stage, providing Islam as their guidance and identity.

"O People who Believe! Firmly establish the commands of Allah, giving testimony with justice - and do not let the enmity of anyone tempt you not to do justice; Be just: that is nearer to piety; and fear Allaah."

(Qur'aan; Al-Maa'idah: 5:8).

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ كُونُوا۟ قَوَّٰمِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ ۖ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ
شَنَـَٔانُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰٓ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا۟ ۚ ٱعْدِلُوا۟ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ
خَبِيرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَعَدَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ ۙ لَهُم

All children should be treated equally.

Al-Nu'maan ibn Basheer (may Allaah be pleased with him) said that his father brought him to the Messenger of Allaah (swas) and said, *"I have given this son of mine a slave that I had." The Messenger of Allaah (swas) said, "Have you given something similar to all of your children?" He said, "No." So the Messenger of Allaah (swas) said, "Then take (the slave) back."* (Narrated by al-Bukhaari; see al-Fath, 5/211).

The Prophet (swas) said to the man who had preferred one of his children over others in giving him a gift: *"Would you not like all of them to honor you equally?"* (Narrated by Imaam Ahmad, 4/269; Saheeh Muslim, no. 1623).

As I entered my local Islamic school, I heard children asking all the time, everywhere, "Is it going to be fun, teacher? Is it going to be fun? Otherwise, we don't want it." It is courageous to answer, "No, it is not going to be fun, but what about challenging?" "What's challenging?" They open their eyes wide, interested.

'Why today does education always has to be fun?' I wonder. If children expect all to be fun all the time, where are they going to put their real efforts? Aren't they going to find that life is a joke and learning Islam is fun, just fun, not serious? Will they understand that they have to apply Islamic principles to their life? The teacher should say, "You will not have fun, but you will understand why committing sins displeases Allah and what you can do to avoid sins. Don't you like being good? Now,

listen and think! Learning is interesting. Learning will become your passion."

Our manual of the good teacher tells us to look impressive and impose authority by looking straight in children's eyes, to put one's hand on their shoulders to signify 'get to work'. The same manual encourages us to apply strict and consistent rules for everybody without distinction. Why parents continue saying, "Yes, my darling, you have to be responsible, you have to be adult, call me Anne, not mommy, I am your friend, not your guardian." Then they are astonished of the responses they get. Slam, the door of the older child's bedroom slaps brutally. Parent knocks at the door, "You want to talk about it, darling?" Child, "If you do not leave me in peace, I'll sue you!" From where does this come from? Think the parent alarmed. Eh! Your favorite entertainment show on TV, and you thought it was funny? Yes, on TV! When they pick up food and make a mess and they prevent guests from talking, drawing all the attention to themselves, parents say, "O my! They learn this at school!" "Then, take them back home. Teach them yourself!" "I do not have any patience with them." "Do you want to be the servant of your children?" "No, I don't." "Then, be quick about reforming what you do, but mind the four generations' lesson, not too strict, not too loose. Just in between! And pray Allah every day to make things easy for you. He'll answer, *Insha Allah*."

"A child who is three years old should see his mother and father praying, and he should hear them reciting Qur'aan, for if a child hears his parents and brothers reciting Qur'aan and daily dhikr repeatedly, this nourishes his soul and brings his heart to life as the rain brings life to a dry barren land, because when a child hears his parents remembering Allaah and sees them worshipping him, that has an effect on his own words and actions.

An example of that is the following story of a young girl: Her mother finished her wudoo', and her three-year-old daughter washed her face and hands, copying her mother, then she raised her forefinger saying, "*Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah*." This indicates that the little girl had been watching her mother and noticed that there was a specific dhikr to be said after making wudoo'.

In another story, a mother did the Sunnah of wudoo' (saying "*Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah*") one day, then she got up to finish her housework. Her daughter had gotten used to seeing her mother sitting after praying until she had finished reciting the du'aa's to be said after prayer, and she noticed that her mother had got up straight after doing the Sunnah prayer, so she said to her, "Why did you get up before saying, "*Astaghfir-Allaah*"? This attitude indicates how closely children watch their parents.

Man is exposed to sickness and diseases, and a child may fall ill. Then his illness should be an opportunity to strengthen his relationship with Allaah, by reminding him of the virtues of good health, and that it is the blessing of Allaah, and that we must thank

Him for that, and that man has no power and no strength except with his Lord. When giving him medicine or going to the hospital, we should tell him that healing comes from Allaah, but these are means which Allaah has enjoined upon us. Then we should get them accustomed to ruqyah as prescribed in sharee'ah. We should tell them about the example of the Prophets and how they took the necessary means and put their trust in Allaah, such as the story of Ayyoob (peace be upon him) and his sickness, and the story of Ya'qoob (peace be upon him), when he told his sons to enter by different gates, and that would not avail them against Allaah at all, and how he left the matter to Allaah. Allaah tells us that Ya'qoob said: *"Do not enter by one gate, but enter by different gates, and I cannot avail you against Allaah at all" [Yoosuf 12:67 – interpretation of the meaning]*

One of the most important things is to remind children to seek reward and to bear sickness and medical treatment with patience. One little girl reminded her mother that Allaah wanted her to bear with patience the sickness which the doctors described as chronic. That was according to human doctors, but healing is in the hand of Allaah. The mother remembered that this child had to take medicine twice every day, and her mother always reminded her to seek reward. One day this little girl said to her mother, "I will get reward because I am taking this medicine." She said that as if she felt proud of this reward and the reward that her family and siblings would receive. "

(From **Ummahaat qurb Abnaa'ihinna**, p. 21)

Finally, we should spend some time learning about *adaab* (Islamic good manners).

"On the Internet, a sister raised in a Muslim country was writing about the wonderful freedoms of living in the US. Some Muslims seem to take the influence of an Islamic atmosphere for granted ; *adhan* being called at each prayer time, modestly dressed people, *halal* food the norm, everyone greeting with salaams, lack of crime, availability of Qur'anic teachers and people treating one another as brothers and sisters in Islam, as being an influence in their upbringing. The importance of this environment on a young Muslims' mind can not be replaced by the material advantages of living in a western country. The Western society teaches children by exposure that the norm of society is high crime, alcohol, fornication, high divorce rate, teenage pregnancies, deviant sexual practices, immodest clothing, putting individual desires over societal needs, lack of morals and charity, etc. According to Dr. Shahid Athar in "Sex Education: An Islamic Perspective", children in America are exposed to 9,000 sexual scenes per year through the media and on television . Even now in public schools children are taught that homosexuality is an acceptable alternative form of family life. "

Western Education vs. Muslim Children

By Khadija Anderson

But if parents watch TV, go to sleep late, etc. children do the same and copy bad behaviors.

The Prophet, upon whom be peace, walked into a mosque where there was a group of people surrounding a man. The Prophet inquired, "Who is that?" He was told, "That is a very learned man." The Prophet asked, "What is a learned man?" They told him, "He is the most learned man regarding Arab genealogies, past heroic episodes, the days of Jahiliyyah, and Arabic poetry." The Prophet said, "That is knowledge whose ignorance does not harm one nor is its possession of any benefit to one."



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Are you a Ummah Warrior?

A woman in the time of Rasulullaah (swas): One of the most distinguished women who took part in the battle of Uhud, if not the most distinguished of them, was Nasibah bint Ka'b al-Maziniyyah, Umm 'Umarah (May Allah be pleased with her). At the beginning of the battle, she was bringing water and tending the wounded, as the other women were doing. When the battle was going in the favor of the Muslims, the archers disobeyed the command of the Prophet (swas), and this turned the victory into defeat, as the Qur'aan described it: "Behold! You were climbing up the high ground, without even casting a side glance at anyone, and the Messenger in your rear was calling you back..." (Qur'aan 3:153)

At this point, Nasibah went forward, with her sword unsheathed and her bow in her hand, to join the small group who were standing firm with the Prophet (swas), acting as a human shield to protect him from the arrows of the *mushrekeen*. Every time danger approached the Prophet (SAW) she hastened to protect him. The Messenger of Allah (swas) noticed this, and later said, "Wherever I turned, to the left or the right, I saw her fighting for me."

What are we today compared to the Sahabas?

People of that time were warriors, took care of each other (were Awliayah), were parents and children who had to take care of their own parents, and they had their own daily jobs to take care of. Men and women were equal in their rights and completed each other and had the

choice to make their own decisions as the example of Nasibah proves it. Not only people of that time did the minimum, but they did the extra, and doing the extra, they were happy and proud; they felt fulfilled both men and women.

Men defended the Muslim *ummah* and went to work outside the house everyday; when they got home, they helped with the housework and the education of the children.

Women gave birth to children and took care of the work at home and the fields whenever their husbands were at war. They made time also for visiting the sick, taking care of the wounded or even fought among the men.

Today, men complain about women and women complain about men. Doing the extra for each other has become a burden, so many people look for what Islam is expecting them to do. (What are my duties and my rights as a Muslim man or as a Muslim woman? Do I have to cook for my husband? Am I obligated to teach my wife? Etc.) This way, they lose the spontaneity of love and care. Marriage becomes a contract, not a means of gaining *hasanaat*. Our enemies succeeded in putting bad feelings of iniquity between couples and between parents and children. The first Muslim man I met taught me one thing I have never forgotten in all my life: the pleasure of serving others. I was sick and he came to my place, cooked for me, prepared medicine for me, got my courses, talked to my teachers, cleaned my apartment and called my family! He did not do it out of pity or because he felt obligated, no, he did it out of compassion, with the smile on his face always, with kinds words always and with the uplifting feeling of doing something (charity) for the sake of Allaah. I will never forget his wonderful words when I asked him if he did not feel strange for doing those things for me. He said: "No, not at all! For each time I serve you, I gain *hasanaat*. It is *barakah*. Maybe this way my sins will go away and I will reach *Jannah*, *Insha Allaah*." I smiled back and I promised to myself I would compete with him to serve him and to serve people. I never regretted this. Serving people is a pleasure and it is a blessing, *Alhamdulillaah*, for both men and women. Serving one's husband and serving one's wife is the most beautiful gift of all. If I have to protect my husband, I will do it; I will begin by everyday tasks, with everything he likes, by kind words and good behavior and I will protect him from *Shaytan*, *Insha* Allaah, by encouraging him in his Islam. I will do the same for my children. When he will serve me, he will do it by kind words and nice behavior, by listening and sharing, by helping and being happy doing it, *Insha Allaah*. To be truly Muslims is to protect each other's honor and to want for each other what we would like for ourselves. Protecting each other's honor is to fight against the tricks of those who want us to forget about the true teachings of Islam, it is to fight against the *dunyah* (material life), it is to go beyond looking at what we do and what others do for us; it is to honor Muslims as brothers and our best brothers are our spouse and family. To want for each other what we would like for ourselves is to protect others from harm and one of the harms that we often overlook is our reputation. We Muslims should stop telling others or each other how much we do not love each other or how much we are disorganized

or how much people have little faith, etc. Instead of tarnishing our reputation, let's encourage each other to protect our reputation and encourage each other to love one another, to look at the good that is done, to organize things at our own level, maybe just one or two families who do *halaqah* once a week with each other. Changes can be made only at one's level, with our small skills.

Nasibah was not expected to fight among the men, but she did it with happiness and determination, not because she tried to prove a woman could do it, but because she felt strong about her decision; she felt strong about protecting the man she considered a pearl for the whole humanity. Shouldn't we consider each and every Muslim a pearl for humanity? Just feeling happy and grateful to be able to serve him or her. What purpose does our pride serve but the tricks of the *Shaytan*?

This is the important message we have to transmit to our children so they can be free individuals, free from what could spoil their entire lives.
Teaching our children begins by teaching ourselves.
Teaching our children begins by gaining wisdom.
And Islam is wisdom.

TIPS TO EDUCATE YOUR CHILDEN ISLAMICALLY

Muslims parents' responsibility begins way before the birth of a child, by educating themselves to be good Muslim they will be a model for their children. We know that children copy their parents and peers out of love and trust; parents are the first role models.



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Education begins by educating ourselves.

To protect one's child from *Shaytan* is one of the most important jobs of the parents, at the conception, when one wants to consummate the marriage, and throughout all his life:

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) who said: *"When one of you wants to approach (have intercourse with) his wife, if he says: 'Bismillahi Allaahumma jannibna al-Shaytaan wa jannib al-Shaytaan ma razaqtana (In the name of Allaah, O Allaah, protect us from Shaytaan and protect whatever You give to us from Shaytaan)' – then if they are given a child, Shaytaan will not harm it."* (Reported by al-Bukhaari, *Fath*, no. 3271)

At Nightime:

***Hadith - Bukhari 4:523, Narrated Jabir bin Abdullah* (swas)**

Allah's Apostle (swas) said, *"When night falls (or it is evening), keep your children close to you for the devils spread out at that time. But when an hour of the night elapses, you can let them free. Close the doors and mention the Name of Allah, for Shaytaan (Satan) does not open a closed door."*

When he does anything, even when he enters the home or when someone looks at him enviously and might give him the bad eye (which is not a myth).

"And verily, those who disbelieve would almost make you slip with their eyes (through hatred) when they hear the Reminder (the Qur'aan)…" *[al-Qalam 68:51]*

Al-Saddi said: "[This means] they would harm you with their eyes (evil eye)." *Tafseer al-Baghawi*, 8/202.

This is also indicated by the general meaning of the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): "The (evil) eye is real." Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 5740; Muslim, 2187.

A person who is close to Allaah, always remembering Him (*dhikr*) and reading Qur'aan, is less likely to be affected by the evil eye and other kinds of harm from the devils of mankind and the *jinns*. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to seek refuge with Allaah for himself, and the greatest means of seeking refuge that is available to the Muslim is reading the Book of Allaah, above all the *Mi'wadhatayn* (the last two *Soorahs* of the Qur'aan, *al-Falaq* and *al-Naas*), *Soorat al-Faatihah* and *Aayat al-Kursiy* [al-Baqarah 2:255]

In Islam, having children is at the same time a blessing and a trial. If everything is done in the Faith, it is a blessing but if one strays from the path and gets too attached to worldly matters, it becomes a calamity.

Hadith - Tirmidhi , a hasan sahih tradition.

Allah's Messenger (swas) said, *"The believing man or woman continues to have affliction in person, property and children so that they may finally meet Allah, free from sin."*

Hadith - Dawud, Narrated Muhammad ibn Khalid as-Sulami

As-Sulami's grandfather, who was a Companion of the Apostle of Allah (swas) said: I heard the Apostle of Allah (swas) say: *"When Allah has previously decreed for a servant a rank which he has not attained by his action, He afflicts him in his body, or his property or his children."*

This is why Muslim parents should always recite supplications for the good of the family:

Hadith - Tirmidhi, Narrated Umar ibn al-Khattab **(ru)**

Allah's Messenger (swas) taught him to say, *"O Allah, make my inner nature better than my outer, and make my outer nature good. O Allah, I ask Thee to give me some of the abundance thou givest to men, in family, property and children, which neither strays nor leads astray."*

Each person in the family is responsible for someone else. This is how harmony is created. Even the children must learn to take care of their brothers and sisters, whatever their age and they must be kind to their parents and serve them and respect their privacy at all times:

***"All of you are shepherds, and each one is responsible for his flock. A leader of people is a shepherd over this family, and he is responsible for his flock. A woman is like a shepherd over her husband's house and children, and she is responsible for them. And a slave is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for it. So all of you are guardians and are responsible for your charges."* Al- Bukhari and Muslim.**

The Noble Qur'an - An-Nur 24:58-9

"O you who believe! Let your legal slaves and slave-girls, and those among you who have not come to the age of puberty ask your permission (before they come to your presence) on three occasions; before morning prayer, and while you put off your clothes for the noonday (rest), and after the 'Isha (latenight) prayer. (These) three times are of privacy for you, other than these times there is no sin on you or on them to move about, --attending (helping) you each other. Thus Allah makes clear the Ayat (the Verses of this Qur'an, showing proofs for the legal aspects of permission for visits, etc.) to you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

And when the children among you come to puberty, then let them (also) ask for permission, as those senior to them (in age). Thus Allah makes clear His Ayat (Commandments and legal obligations) for you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise."

Children are servants of the parents, but the parents are not the servants of their children:

The Noble Qur'an - Luqmaan 31:14-15

"And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon

weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years give thanks to Me and to your parents, unto Me is the final destination.
But if they (both) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not, but behave with them in the world kindly, and follow the path of him who turns to Me in repentance and in obedience. Then to Me will be your return, and I shall tell you what you used to do."

***Hadith - Dawud, Narrated Abu Sa'id* (ru):**
A man from Yemen migrated to Madinah to be with the Prophet (swas). The Prophet (swas) asked him, 'Do you have any relatives in Yemen?' He answered, 'My parents.' 'Did you ask their permission?' the Prophet (swas) asked. On his replying that he did not, the Prophet (swas) told him, 'Go back to them and ask their permission. If they agree to it, go on *jihad*. Otherwise stay and serve them.'

Parents should fulfill their needs before the needs of their chidden, whether it is spiritual or material or emotional because if the parents are lacking of something, the whole family suffers from it. That is the tragedy of *Kufar* families!

***Hadith - Dawud, Narrated Buraydah ibn al-Hasib* (ru)**
The Prophet (swas) commanded to give sadaqah. A man said:
"Apostle of Allah, I have a dinar. He said: Spend it on yourself. He again said: I have another. He said: Spend it on your children. He again said: I have another. He said: Spend it on your wife. He again said: I have another. He said: Spend it on your servant. He finally said: I have another. He replied: You know best (what to do with it)."

Parents should make time for both the worldly affairs and studying the *deen* of Al-Islam.
***Hadith - Dawud, Narrated Buraydah ibn al-Hasib* (ru)**
"I met AbuBakr. He said: Who are you? He (Hanzalah) said: Hanzalah has turned out to be a hypocrite. He (AbuBakr) said: Hallowed be Allah, what are you saying? Thereupon he said: I say that when we are in the company of Allah's Messenger (swas) we ponder over Hell-Fire and Paradise as if we are seeing them before our very eyes. When we are away from Allah's Apostle (swas) we attend to our wives, our children, our business; most of these things (pertaining to the After life) slip out of our minds. AbuBakr said: By Allah, I also experience the same. So AbuBakr and I went to Allah's Apostle and said to him: Allah's Apostle (swas), Hanzalah has turned to be a hypocrite. Thereupon Allah's Apostle (swas) said: What has happened to you? I said: Allah's Apostle, when we are in your company, we are reminded of Hell-Fire and Paradise as if we are seeing them with our own eyes, but whenever we go away from you and attend to our wives, children and business, many of these things go out of our minds. Thereupon Allah's Apostle said: By Him in Whose Hand is my life, if your state of mind remains the same as it is

in my presence and you are always busy in remembrance (of Allah), the angels will shake hands with you in your beds and on your paths. However, Hanzalah, time should be devoted (to the worldly affairs) and time (should be devoted to prayer and meditation). He (the holy Prophet) said this thrice."

Human beings are born with the ability to recognize what is right and what is wrong. This inherited skill, a gift from Allaah, is even stronger in children because they are not yet educated to believe in a certain way or spoiled by their education. Children however are not small adults; they have to learn how to become the best Muslim they can be; they have to learn the rules of Islam and be rightly guided.

It is not because we can judge and separate the right from the wrong that we are equipped with understanding and the true faith; this must be acquired through time.

Parents are the educators of their children; they cannot delegate this teaching to others. They are the primary guides because they have the child's complete trust and they should know Islam intellectually.

Their children can be compared to a flood and the parents as the barriers that conduct the flood back into the river bed.

Furthermore, parents should educate the children as a whole person, that is, physically, mentally as well as morally (religiously).



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Methods for physical preparation:

1. **The child should learn cleanliness from an early age. He should be clean in his body, clothes, and his surroundings and he should love cleanliness in his life. This could be attained by teaching him early on to perform *Wudoo*, stay clean after going to bathroom, put away his toys and clean his clothes along with his parents. He should help (whether male or female) wash the**

dishes, remove his shoes before entering any place or use the *siwak*. The parents are his major models.

WHAT THE PARENTS DO NOT DO, THE CHILDREN WILL NOT DO, besides a Muslim should never ask from anyone what he would not do for himself.

2. Make sure the child feeds on everything that is *halal* and teach him what is *haram* and the importance of eating what Allaah prescribed to eat and to refuse, especially outside home, what is not permissible to eat. Explain the basics of healthy habits in a way he can understand.

3. Encourage the practice of sports such as running, swimming, shooting and riding, and sports that make the body strong and active in a wholesome atmosphere. Enroll the child into a Muslim scout camp or a team. Practice with him even if it is playing with a ball or playing hide and seek. Make a daily stroll a habit for the whole family.

4. Teach him to pray as soon as it is possible and make sure he is present when you pray so he might imitate you and enjoy it.

PHYSICAL HABITS ARE TAKEN BY PRACTICING, NOT BY TELLING.

5. Encourage him to fast a few hours per day until he can fast more.

Methods for mental preparation:

1. **Teach your child reading and writing in Arabic and make the recitation of Al Qur'aan a singing activity where everyone competes for learning new *ayat* or *surat*.**
2. **Use index cards to quiz family members.**
3. **Encourage your child to look for the superiority in learning all kinds of knowledge and sciences. Stress the importance of knowledge in Islam, even if it is learning *surat* related to it.**
4. **Discuss everything he learns. If he learns in a public school, make sure he does not learn anything against Islam. If he does, complain to the school and work out compromises. Talk to his teachers about Islam. Check if he does his homework and help in the process of learning. Prefer home schooling or employ *eemaams*, Islamic teachers or *tajweed* reciters to educate your children daily. Remember that Qur'aan is easy for children to learn at an early age if encouraged positively.**
5. **Be attentive to any event or opportunity around him, which will enable his mental growth and give him the correct inference capabilities. Use hands-on experiences and turn any event or outing into an occasion to learn.**

"Cheaper by the Dozen", by Frank B., Jr. Gilbreth, is an excellent autobiographical book for learning how to teach your children daily.

6. **Encourage him to put his knowledge into daily practice.**
7. **Fun should be a part of his teaching, but not always.**
8. **Touring or traveling in the land and pondering all the different marks and signs of Allah and the history of previous people and nations is essential to develop his natural skills for communication and his openness of mind. He should learn how to relate as well.**

9. You should give him responsibilities that correspond to his capabilities and maturity. For instance, encourage your child to teach other children or adults about what he has just learned. Withhold these privileges when he behaves badly.

Methods for moral preparation:

1. Parents should show the values of good deeds and their effects on the individuals and society; also showing the effects of bad deeds, all within the child's capability of understanding. They should read them stories and draw moral lessons from them. The *Seerah* is a good start as well as the Noble Qur'aan and the life of the prophets (PBUTA).

2. Parents should be a good example in their behavior because children like to imitate their parents in their sayings and their deeds.

3. Teach the child to be proud of being a Muslim. Explain why we worship Allaah and what we gain in the Hereafter and inthis life for it. Pray often with him. The Prophet Muhammad (swas) said, *"Order your children to pray at the age of seven."*
Teach him to react with honor and self-respect but not with pride. Teach him leadership and the skill of working in group with his peers and dodge when necessary, especially to avoid conflict or behaviors against Islamic teachings.

4. Teach him what he should do in difficult situations and let him take decisions from time to time.

5. Give him responsibilities in *masjid* like saying the *Adhan* or leading other children in prayer or even the whole assembly if he is able to. *Masjid* should be his second house so he should attend whenever the parents are attending, and he should learn early his place in *masjid*, boys with men and girls with women.

10. Teach him to love the Muslims (small and big, regardless of race, language, or origin) and be happy talking to everyone with kindness. Let him socialize and let others take him in their arms. Let him play with the children.
11. Encourage him to sympathize with Muslim problems and to contribute to the solutions such as the poverty problem and to donate some money (from his economies) to the hungry Muslim children.
12. Encourage him to do presentations in places where Muslims go.
13. Help him put shoes in rack in *masjid* or let him offer *siwak* to Muslims or help serving during *sukhur* in *Ramadhan.* Let him put incense and clean *masjid*. Encourage him to be an example to other children.
14. Teach him to say "*astaghfirullah*" and ask forgiveness as a daily habit. Make it pleasurable and not a duty. Tell him about Allaah watching all he does. Teach him not to imitate others, that he is special and better if he follows Islam on his own. Teach him the importance of reviving a *Sunnah* when nobody is doing it.

15. Wake him up for night prayer or when you go to *masjid*, even if it is to let him sleep in a corner. Pray with him in your arms.
16. Make *du'aas* a fun activity and a place to ask good things for those he loves and for the world Ummah too.

Methods for parents attitudes:

It is well known that a child will grow in self-confidence and respect for himself if he is loved and respected by his parents. It is even said that the child's immune system is reinforced if he is emotional satisfied.

1. Treat your children kindly.

When Prophet Muhammad (swas) was praying as an Imam with the people, his grandson Al-hasan, son of his daughter Fatima, may Allah be pleased with, rode his back while he was bowing, lengthened his bow. When he finished his prayer, some of the companions said, "You lengthened your bow? "Then the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) answered, "My grandson rode my back and I hate hastening him".

2. Treat your children with respect and equally, not with condescension. Do not mock what they do or say.
3. Take your children's emotions seriously but a bit of humor sometimes works best.
4. Admire what they do when it is good and admonish for the bad they commit in complete conscience. Reflect before acting. Do not punish them for what they do in ignorance.
5. Do not criticize them before other adults or before their peers.
6. Never refuse to hug or kiss them when they need it and deserve it. Do not reward them with love when they are bad.
7. Be forgiving and merciful
8. Give them compliments
9. Instill love in them for their sisters and brothers and relatives.
10. When you give to one child, give tot he other as well.
11. Teach them to share with everyone, even with those who are bad to them. Teach them to compromise.
12. Say everyday: I love to be a mother. I love to be a father! Is there anything better? Yes, to be a Muslim, a spouse and a relative! If you do not love your job, do something else!

Teaching is so important after protecting the child that it is the responsibility of the entire Muslim community, so it is permissible to admonish a child that is not your own. This proves our commitment to raise a strong and a spiritually healthy Ummah.

"Abu Bakr admonished me and poked me with his hands in the flank, and nothing stopped me from moving at that time except the position of Allah's Apostle whose head was on my thigh."
(Hadith - Bukhari 7:177, Narrated Aisha)

Education of Muslim Children in the West: Which way?

The West in general is drawn into a sea of problems reflected at school:

- Crime
- Violence including domestic
- Sexual promiscuity and immorality (also children abuse)
- Drugs (also used to fight stress)
- Homosexuality (taught as normal at school and in the medias)
- Poverty (especially strong contrast between poor and rich)
- Divorce (viewed as a normal option)
- Single parents (women refuse marriage and men. One million teen-age pregnancies of unmarried mothers per year.)
- Children traumatized emotionally and psychologically as a result of broken families (they cannot love anymore)
- Disrupted upbringing (people are lost; they follow their desires)
- Spousal/child abuse (domestic battery or dishonesty)

All of this has great influence on and impacts the Muslims living in the West. The parents try to teach Islamic values and morals to the children, but as soon as they go outside the home, the children are in a totally different environment. Since they spend most of their time at school, which means outside home, their world is outside, not inside the home. Since the outside social environment is in opposition to what Muslim children are learning at home, children are questioning their identity, what their parents teach them and they got through fighting a psychological battle in their minds.

Islam is very deeply concerned with the welfare of human society, and the family is considered to be the cornerstone for building the right society. Raising children in a non-Islamic culture or a culture that is strongly influenced by the West and expecting them to learn Islamic values is almost a contradiction.

Giving more religious teachings to children at home is not enough. It is extremely important for parents to spend time with their children. The problem is, parents have less and less time for their children! Parents have to find time for games, field trips, picnics, and tours. The most essential element is communicating with the children and never stop communicating. Children should not have any hesitation to say to their parents their thoughts and feelings. They should feel supported and understood too, given solutions.

The school system in the West deals with the teaching of academic subjects as well as life skills, such as prevention of smoking and drug abuse, prevention of heart disease, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Children should get Islamic education at home as well as at Islamic centers or Islamic schools, so that they associate school with Islamic education too, not only with academic subjects. They should consider Islam as an academic subject! The Islamization of knowledge is then important.

Muslim children should have an opportunity to bond with each other and to their Islamic history.

When they meet other children who are Muslim, when they learn about the lives of the *Sahabas*, the Muslim conquests and discoveries in the world, it enhances their confidence in being a Muslim; they feel supported and understood and most of all belonging to an exceptional community.

Problems in Islamic Schools

- No successful teaching of *Adaab* and Islamic etiquette
- Free mixing of sexes from an early age and promiscuity
- A teacher is not only a teacher but a brother or a sister, which complicates matters and they might be expected more leniency
- Rough behavior: laughing out loud, no respect for teachers, talking when not permitted or backbiting, and removal of Hijab as soon as the parents or elders are not looking.
- Islamic schools are running without an Islamic curriculum, often without a syllabus
- No textbooks or adequate Islamic materials in library
- No qualified and trained teachers or certified teachers. (Quality in education is not possible without good teachers.) Unhappy non Muslim teachers replace Muslim teachers.
- Qualified and certified Muslim teachers work in Public schools as Islamic schools do not offer viable salaries, benefits (pension health benefits, etc.) so that teachers in Islamic school do not enjoy much respect.
- When children leave Islamic schools and graduate from colleges, they do marry non-Muslims and they have a better opinion of non-Muslim institutions.
- Islam have had zero influence on them.
- Chronic shortage of space, science labs, auditoriums, gyms, playgrounds, libraries, bathrooms and old, slow computers.
- High turnover rate (30 to 40 percent annually) of teachers.
- School Boards require training in how to run a school and they rarely include women who do most of the teaching or people who know anything about education.
- Parents do not play a part in Governance structure
- Administrators are not qualified so schools lose money and do not have any structure.
- Parents worry Islamic schools offer an inferior quality of education and academic subjects might be left out.
- Children are not prepared to face competitiveness and the challenges of the modern world.
- For many Muslim families, Islamic schools are not affordable or parents do not pay on time or fully, which add to the financial problems of the school.
- The Islamic school does not provide the entire K-12 educational experience and high schools are rare, breaking the mold of Islamic education at a tender and rebellious age.

Home Schooling, a solution?

- The best and safest place for a Muslim child to be educated is at home, but it is possible only for a small number because parents do not qualify, are too busy or the local government ask them to obtain first a diploma in education.
- Parents need a strong motivation and build many skills. They also need to work both in cooperation and get along well.
- Parents have to be well armed and prepared to face the society before they can teach skills to their children. They must be smart, mature, knowledgeable and very organized. They must balance between secular and Islamic teachings.
- Parents see the fruit of their efforts quickly and control what the child learns and they keep their children innocent.
- Teaching one owns children can be an exhilarating experience and one can pass on useful skills of adaptation to society.
- Children might be happier because public or private schools might have turned them away from being interested, self-motivated and taken the joy of learning away from them.
- Public schools might have been working against the parent's authority and might have been unfriendly to Muslim ethics.
- Parents develop their own curriculum, pick out their own books, texts and workbooks that best suit their needs and family's learning style. They work at an individual level with their child, following their child personal rhythm.
- Home schooling removes children from an environment of non-Islamic celebrations, drugs, violence, alcohol, sexual experimentation, gangs, and peer pressure. It returns them to a healthy, safe, God-fearing and loving environment.
- Classes can be held whenever liked, even on Saturday and Sunday, during Christian holidays, so that the load can be lightened during *Ramadhan* and stopped for the *Eids* as well as during the *Sunnah* days of fasting.
- When family moves and relocates, continuity in education is preserved and they do not need to re-specify dietary laws.
- School days at home are shorter and children learn quicker.
- There are magazines, WEB sites, distance learning programs and curriculum specifically designed for and devoted to this segment of the homeschooling population. There are group supports too.
- Socialization proves to be better quality.
- Some Muslim organizations meet the social needs of Muslim children: Muslim Youth Camps, MYNA, local *Masjid* youth programs, summer camps, vacation camps, Muslim Athletes United International
- Home-schoolers watch much less television and read more, and their mind is more alert and focussed. They are free thinkers.
- Home-schoolers achievement test scores are exceptionally high and they have more time for hands-on education.

Other solutions for Education

- Professional development for school board, staff, teachers:

http://www.mascis.org/

http://www.islamist.org/

http://www.islamfortoday.com/dawahcourse.htm

http://www.amrnet.demon.co.uk/

- Correspondence courses

Islamic American university:

http://www.islamicau.org/

- Distance learning via the World Wide Web: The gateway to educational materials, free or not:

http://www.thegateway.org/

- Muslim teaching materials in the curriculum:

The Islamic Foundation of North America: IFNA:

http://www.islamicedfoundation.com/

http://iqra.org/

- Virtual Islamic Schools:

http://www.witness-pioneer.org/school/catalog.htm

- Muslim Home school network:

http://www.muslimhomeschool.com/

- Islamic teaching:

http://www.salaam.co.uk/education/index.php?file=GCSE.html#q2

http://www.islamatschool.org.uk/index.htm

http://www.islamatschool.org.uk/index.htm

http://arabesq.com/educate/hw.html

http://www.geocities.com/islamforpublicschools/

http://www.islamicinterlink.com/subject/islamedu.html

http://www.angelfire.com/hi/TalibAlIlm/link1.html

- Islamic teaching slinks:

http://www.geocities.com/zcdeen/islam006.htm

- Muslim Home schooling

Webring [http://dir.webring.com/rw]:

http://i.webring.com/hub?ring=muslimhomeschool&id=2&hub

http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Meadows/5621/

- Camps, competitions:

http://www.alimy.org/

http://www.muslimcamp.com/

http://www.thinkquest.org/library/lib/site_sum_outside.html?tname=17137&url=17137/

- Muslim schools Association

http://www.ams.uk.net/

- Yahoo Muslim home schooling (the most animated):

http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/dir/Religion___Beliefs/Islam/Home_Schooling

- Teaching Guidelines:

http://www.iberr.co.za/english3.htm

- Non-Muslim Parochial Schools

- Non-Muslim Private Schools

- Charter Schools-funded by state and local governments are Independent public schools formed by teachers, parents and/or community members. Exempt from state and local laws and/or policies in exchange for a written contract (or Charter) that specifies certain results are achieved. NOT ALLOWED TO TEACH RELIGION. However school's mission may emphasize on the study of a particular language, cultural and ethnic traditions, and history infused with state's core curriculum.

Examples of Charter Schools: Star International Academy and Universal Academy.

http://www.uscharterschools.org

Question #4237: Islamic education in the West

Islam Q&A; Sheikh Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid (www.islam-qa.com)

Praise be to Allaah.

In order to preserve the structure of the Muslim family in the kaafir countries, we need to meet a number of conditions and requirements, both within the home and outside it:

- Within the home:

1. It is essential for parents to uphold the habit of praying regularly in the mosque with their children; if there is no mosque nearby, then they must pray in *jamaa'ah* at home.
2. They have to read Qur'aan and listen to its recitation daily.
3. They must eat meals together.
4. They must speak in the language of the Qur'aan as much as they can.
5. They must uphold the good manners prescribed by the Lord of the Worlds for families and in social settings; these include those that are to be found in *Soorat al-Noor.*
6. They should not let themselves or their children watch immoral and corrupt movies.
7. Their children have to sleep at home and should stay home as much as possible, to protect them from the influences of the bad environment outside. They should be very strict in not allowing their children to sleep outside the home ("sleepovers").

8. They should avoid sending their children to universities far from home where they would have to stay in university accommodation, otherwise we will lose our children, who will be assimilated into the *kaafir* society.
9. We have to be careful to eat only *halaal* food and the parents must avoid using all kinds of *haraam* things such as cigarettes, marijuana and other things which are widely available in *kaafir* countries.

- Outside the home:

1. We must send our children to Islamic schools from kindergarten to the end of secondary school (high school).
2. We must also send them to the mosque as much as possible, to pray *Jumu'ah* and other prayers in *jamaa'ah*, and to attend lectures, *halaqahs* and study circles, etc.
3. We must establish educational and sporting activities for children and youth in places that are supervised by Muslims.
4. Organizing educational camps where all members of the family can go.
5. Fathers and mothers should strive to go to the Holy Places to perform the rituals of *'Umrah* and the obligations of *Hajj*, accompanied by their children.
6. Training children to speak about Islam in simple language which adults and children, Muslim and non-Muslim, can understand.
7. Training children to memorize Qur'aan and sending some of them – if possible – to a Muslim Arab country so that they can gain an understanding of the religion, then come back to be *daa'iyahs* who are equipped with knowledge of Islam and the language of the Qur'aan.
8. Training some of our sons to give *Jumu'ah Khutbahs*, and to lead the Muslims in prayer, so that they will become leaders of the Muslim community.
9. Encouraging children to marry early so as to protect their religious and worldly interests.

10-We have to encourage them to marry Muslim girls from families who are known for their religious commitment and good attitudes.

11-We have to avoid using the number 911 and calling the police to come to the house to resolve conflicts. If conflicts arise, we must get in touch with a responsible member of the Muslim community or with wise Muslims to help resolve the conflict.

12-Not attending parties where there is dancing, music and singing, or joining in celebrations of immorality or the festivals of *kufr*; stopping our children, with wisdom, from going to church on Sundays with Christian students.

And Allaah is the Source of strength and the Guide to the Straight Path.

References:

Books:

Understanding Islamic Education and **Elements of Success** by Hamza Yusuf, Alhambra Productions 1-510-713-8724

The Impact of Western Hegemony on Muslim Thought by Prof. Yusuf Progler of City University of New York
http://www.muslimedia.com/impwest2.htm

Sex Education: An Islamic Perspective by Dr. Shahid Athar
http://www.Islam-usa.com

ArabesQ Academy PO Box 77132, Seattle, WA 98133, (206)362-0204
http://www.arabesq.com

The principles Characteristics and rules of Islamic Manners By Marwan Ibrahim al-Kaysi. Morals and Manners in Islam - A Guide to Islamic Aadaab. 1986, The Islamic Foundation

Awakening Worldwide by Shaykh Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah
Written by one of the outstanding scholars of the 20th Century, Islamic Manners is a vital book that exemplifies the sublime Islamic Personality.

100 Ahadith About Islamic Manners, compiled by publisher Dar-us-Salam with Arabic-English translations.

Morals and Manners in Islam: A Guide to Islamic Adab by Marwan Ibrahim Al Kaysi
A compendium of rules regulating Islamic Conduct at the personal, familial and social and other levels. PB 200pp

Internet links:

Islamic Character Sites (many links for different subjects, some not updated)
http://islamic-world.net/links/islamic_Character_sites.htm

The Islamic Manners of Gatherings
http://www.islam1.org/khutub/Manners_of_Gathering.htm

12 Tips for Childrearing by Ibrahim Bowers
http://web.fares.net/w/.ee7f22e

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Love and Sentiment towads Childre
http://filebox.vt.edu/users/oraja/loveofchildren.html

Several serious articles about parenting, at:
http://www.soundvision.com/info/parenting/
http://alislaah2.tripod.com/muslimhome/id1.html
http://azkiah.tripod.com/islamic_education.htm

Children,

According to Quran and Sunnah

http://muttaqun.com/childrenframe.html

http://www.zawaj.com/articles.html

Muslim Family Services
http://www.reliefonline.org/mfs/

The Muslim Family Network:
http://www.al-usrah.net/

A lesson plan:

http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/activity/islam/index.html